CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.847
23 March 2000

Original: ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND FORTY-SEVENTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 23 March 2000, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Sergei Martynov (Belarus)

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The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I declare open the 847th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I should like, at the outset, to extend on behalf of us all a warm welcome to the Minister for Disarmament and Arms Control of New Zealand, the Honourable Matt Robson, and the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Mexico, Her Excellency Ambassador Carmen Moreno, who will be addressing the Conference today. Their presence among us today yet again demonstrates the abiding commitment of their Governments to our common endeavours and the importance that those Governments attach to our forum. I also have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of Canada, Chile, the Russian Federation, Germany, the Netherlands and Italy.

Before beginning our debate, I should like to extent a cordial welcome to our new colleagues, Ambassador Faessler of Switzerland and Ambassador Noboru of Japan, and to assure them of our full cooperation and support in the discharge of their functions.

The rescheduling of our last meeting from 16 to 14 March meant that I was unable to attend it and to make my introductory remarks as President. Today, I should like to make up for that missed opportunity and briefly share with you my view of the state of affairs in the Conference on Disarmament. First of all, however, I should like to express my special gratitude to my immediate predecessor as President of the Conference, Ambassador Chowdhury of Bangladesh, for his valuable advice, his tireless energy and his efforts to seek an acceptable basis for us to begin our substantive work and, indeed, my gratitude to all the previous presidents of the Conference, in this especially difficult time for it, for the creative and exhaustive endeavours to find the sort of compromise solutions needed to launch the work for which we are all here.

I should also most sincerely like to thank the personal representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, and his Deputy, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, and all the secretariat staff for their constant and invaluable assistance and skilful support.

For the Republic of Belarus, which, on 27 November 1996, became a fully nuclear-free State after the withdrawal of the last intercontinental ballistic missile from the territory of the country, and for Belarus as a participant in the five-party process on implementation and the negotiations on major agreements in the field of nuclear disarmament - the START I, INF and ABM treaties - it is an honour to be chairing this Conference for the first time since the admission of our country a few years ago as a fully-fledged member. We realize that, notwithstanding its rotational nature, this lofty post vests in each of its incumbents a special responsibility and requires the maximum of effort to continue developing consensus on the programme of work of the Conference.

For me, there is yet one more personal aspect to my country's presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. Circumstances were such that I began my own work here in Geneva in 1991 under the former membership of the Conference with the submission of the application of the Republic of Belarus for membership of the Conference on Disarmament. The

(The President)

current presidency, in the year 2000, of the Republic of Belarus of the Conference on Disarmament is the symbolic consummation of efforts launched by the representative of Belarus in this very room 10 years ago.

Every occasion has its bright and it not so bright spots. To my great regret, the current presidency of the Conference on Disarmament is no exception to this rule, as it falls in a period when, for a continuing fourth year, efforts to dislodge the Conference from its incapacitating deadlock have failed to achieve the desired results.

In his message to the Conference on Disarmament, the United Nations Secretary-General invited us all to take a candid look at the lack of progress in our work. I believe that this is the very least that we must all do. A candid look is a recognition that the continuing paralysis of the work of the Conference means compromising not only the Conference on Disarmament but also its underlying idea, the idea of multilateral disarmament negotiations as one of the fundamental notions of global security.

Whether we like it or not, the outside world - the world beyond the walls of this cosy Council Chamber - is already reacting to the erosion of the role of the Conference on Disarmament. The Ottawa Convention on Landmines is the first alarm bell.

If the members of the Conference cannot muster the strength, individually and collectively, to change the situation, further alarm bells will sound. We all know at the end of the show the curtain is rung down. I am certain that in this room there is not a single delegation that would want the curtain to be rung down on the Conference on Disarmament. Accordingly, it is time to act. And I do not mean just to appear to act: I mean, to do our work.

It is possible that, in view of the prevailing circumstances, the Conference on Disarmament is not able at this time to do everything, or even to do much, but we can and must do what is within our power.

This is like bearing a flame in the wind. What we have now in our hands is not a blazing torch - no, it is more like the flickering flame of a candle. It is important that we do not let it die, that we shelter it, that we strengthen the flame so that it can burn once again like a torch.

The President of the Conference on Disarmament cannot do this on his own - the rules of procedure and the circumstances preclude it. For that reason I am counting on your support, distinguished members of the Conference.

Perhaps, in my introductory remarks, I have not been sufficiently optimistic in mood. But, if delegations help me, I will be able to correct that mood in my concluding remarks.

I would now like to move to the conduct of today's meeting and I call upon the Minister for Disarmament and Arms Control of New Zealand, the Honourable Matt Robson.

Mr. ROBSON (New Zealand): Tena Koutou, Tena Koutou, Tena Koutou katoa. From the people of Aotearoe, New Zealand, I bring you all greetings. I cannot help but be impressed in this room as I see the mural above us donated by the people of Spain so long ago and to realize that the world failed the people of Spain at that time, and of course, we plunged into the abyss of the Second World War.

It gives me great pleasure to address the Conference, for the first time, on behalf of New Zealand. I congratulate Belarus on assuming the presidency. Your country, Mr. President, joined this Conference alongside New Zealand, or Aotearoa, in 1996. You have no easy road ahead of you. The Conference has stalled in recent years. Disarmament talks internationally, as you know, have reached a dangerous stalemate. It is now more important than ever that we work together to search for agreement which will allow this Conference to work. New Zealand wishes you well, Mr. President. You can count on full support from our country.

I was appointed Minister for Disarmament and Arms Control some months ago following the formation of the Labour/Alliance Coalition Government in Wellington. Disarmament and arms control issues are a priority for us. None of us can afford the luxury of pessimism, and my Government will do all that it can to advocate disarmament and arms control in whatever forum we find ourselves.

New Zealanders made a stand in 1987 when we became nuclear-free. Today we continue to pursue a nuclear-weapon-free world. We are a small country but we are proud of our commitment to disarmament. Last month this was demonstrated in a concrete way with our Parliament's adoption of a resolution calling for the fulfilment of the obligation affirmed in the 1996 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, and I quote, "to pursue in good faith and to bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control". This resolution was supported by parties across the political spectrum. Support for it was unanimous in our Parliament.

Successive New Zealand Governments have long pressed for nuclear disarmament. But this resolution of the New Zealand Parliament states a commitment to an objective for which my Government, in particular, will strive with vigour and determination. Our intention is to galvanize the international community to press forward, with New Zealand, in seeking the eradication of nuclear weapons. Today I want to circulate the text of this resolution and request, Mr. President, that it be tabled as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament.

I would also like this morning to present New Zealand's views on some issues before our Conference. Let me first, however, make a few observations about disarmament and arms control in our world today.

I shall start with the concern felt in all corners of the globe about the uncertain international security environment and its impact on the prospects for disarmament negotiations, including in this body. There is a new and difficult dynamic at work in international relations. Its causes are diverse: nuclear tests in South Asia challenging international norms of non-proliferation and no testing, disappointment in the bilateral nuclear reductions process

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between the United States and Russia that held much promise but is faltering, fears about missile proliferation and missile defence plans, tension between States who must cooperate if we are to press on with the business which will secure future generations from the threats posed by weapons of mass destruction, and the destabilizing proliferation of conventional weapons, small or otherwise. In our corner of the South Pacific, we are aware of the growth of arms among small Pacific States. Indeed, as Conference participants have seen, new obstacles to multilateral talks seem to arise, as soon as compromise appears on the horizon.

We are under no illusion that this is an international environment where progress will be easy, but for New Zealand, one thing is clear: the world must not retreat to the days when the cold-war doctrine of nuclear armament and deterrence seemed unchangeable. New Zealand was part of that, and we changed. Instead we must take the opportunities that are available to prevent a renewed nuclear arms race and to work for disarmament.

We can draw strength and learn lessons from the real achievements of the not-so-distant past. New Zealand recognizes the significance of the START process, and I urge the Russian Duma to agree in its current session to ratify and implement START II. Rapidly moving to a START III negotiation would help restore confidence that article VI in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty will be fulfilled.

Side by side with this bilateral progress there are practical steps that can be taken by all the nuclear-weapon States to reduce their stockpiles and reduce the risk of their use, while this Conference itself addresses further measures to add value to the process. My own vision is that members of nuclear-weapons-free zones can work together more closely to consolidate a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere.

How pleased we were in New Zealand, in the recent conflict in East Timor, that Indonesia had taken the bold step of not being a nuclear power. That conflict, tragic as it was and in which New Zealanders participated as peace-keeping troops, was at least one that had no threat of nuclear weapons.

In all, 136 countries supported the call in the First Committee of the United Nations for a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere. Obviously, a great amount of political spadework still needs to be done to promote this proposal. These are early days yet. But by banding together with other like-minded countries, we can at least show that half the planet has disarmed for good.

New Zealand has learned from our American friends, who have a saying in the Wild West that the cowboys who came to town checked in their weapons with the sheriff. They got them when they left. We shall be asking the nuclear Powers to check in their weapons at the equator. They can collect them when they leave.

We can take the opportunity to urge India and Pakistan to turn back from the path they chose in 1998. As members of the Commonwealth, it gives us great sadness that two countries such as Pakistan and India play with nuclear weapons. We want to beat them in a cricket race,

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not a nuclear race. New Zealand itself has drawn a firm line against acceptance of proliferation in any part of the world. We pay tribute to those States who possessed nuclear weapons as members of the former Soviet Union, gave them up and joined the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as non-nuclear members. Equally, we salute the decisions of others in Africa and Latin America who once stood apart from this Treaty, but have decided in recent years to join the international non-proliferation norm. These States had the choice: they chose the path to national and regional security as non-nuclear-weapon States. Before I became Minister of Disarmament, an example that particularly stood out to me was South Africa. I applauded the post-apartheid Government when it made the courageous decision to decommission its nuclear weapons. The South Africans showed that it can be done, and must be done. They are an example to us all.

The CTBT - a singular achievement for this Conference of great significance for New Zealand - deserves our continued commitment. I urge all those who have yet to sign or ratify to do so, while we work together to prepare its global verification system for entry into force.

This Conference also has the opportunity to proceed with the next step in the process of nuclear disarmament - a fissile material cut-off treaty, which was mandated for action five years ago. It has the chance to agree to deal with nuclear disarmament in a broader context. And there is the prospect of considering preventive measures to keep the realm of outer space peaceful. I urge you to take these opportunities without further delay.

Since the Conference stopped work over three years ago, it has come tantalizingly close on occasions to agreeing to restart, but not close enough. It is difficult for many of us to comprehend that we cannot agree on mechanisms and mandates for addressing these international concerns. We do try to appreciate the views of those who are advocating negotiating mandates and those who are having difficulties accepting them. But, in a body governed by consensus, it does not make sense that we refuse to take the first step to engage, especially in the light of repeated calls for action made by the wider international community in the United Nations General Assembly and elsewhere.

Notwithstanding the difficult international backdrop against which you work, there is evidence that the Conference's procedures are harming prospects for a start to work. For one thing, New Zealand questions whether the Conference on Disarmament should address international security and arms control issues on a narrow year-by-year schedule where there is no guarantee that work begun in one year will continue in the next. The real world does not operate in that way. Neither are other international negotiations the prerogative of only one third of the international community. In short, our immediate focus must be to start substantive work, but New Zealand will also support the Conference taking up the challenge of its own reformation and restoration in the world of multilateral negotiations.

The Conference is in a defining phase. Blame cannot rest at its door alone. But all of its members and observer delegations cannot escape responsibility for the inertia, and the risks that

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its continuing paralysis entails. For New Zealand there is no substitute for multilateralism. Give up on that and we could find ourselves bidding farewell to the chances for a more secure international environment.

I mentioned earlier the opportunities that are present for an end to the stalemate on the international disarmament and arms control agenda. We who are members of the NPT have the chance next month to reaffirm and build upon the deal struck in 1995 when the NPT was made permanent in a package of decisions which strengthened accountability for the implementation of its central promise of non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. My Government is committed to the New Agenda Coalition as offering a way forward. We shall be working at next month's Review Conference with our coalition partners, co-sponsors and supporters to deliver the call it makes for a new political undertaking to accelerate the process of negotiations on eliminating nuclear weapons. In 2000, we must, I believe, signal clearly that there is a new political determination to achieve the disarmament bargain of this Treaty, to quash once and for all the falsehood that indefinite extension sanctioned the indefinite possession of nuclear weapons.

I consider that the call we make in the New Agenda for this new undertaking is the way forward. Once again, I reiterate, that for New Zealand pessimism and stalemate is not our path. It is very much my hope that this Conference - our Conference - and the meeting of NPT members next month conclude likewise.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the Minister for Disarmament and Arms Control of New Zealand for his important statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I would now like to call on Her Excellency Ambassador Carmen Moreno, the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Mexico.

Ms. MORENO (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): Before starting my statement, I would like to thank you for the kind words that you addressed to me personally and I would also like to reiterate the congratulations of my delegation on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I am certain that your diplomatic skill will be a key element for the success of its work and I hope that you will accomplish the progress indispensable for our work in the Conference.

Through you, Sir, I also wish to thank your predecessor, the Ambassador of Bangladesh, for his tireless efforts and valuable proposals, with a view to identifying a programme of work that would be satisfactory to all. Likewise, I would like to thank Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky and his team for their wise counsel.

Yet again I am addressing this Conference on Disarmament to demonstrate, through my presence, the importance that Mexico attaches to nuclear disarmament and to the efforts of the sole multilateral negotiating forum that the international community has established in this field.

The lack of consensus on a global agenda for disarmament in the post-cold war period is deplorable and poses an additional threat to international peace and security. Therefore we must

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reverse this situation as soon as possible. To start the twenty-first century with a new failure of this Conference would be unacceptable and dangerous. Soon we will reach the end of the first part of this year's session without having reached agreement on how to deal with the substantive issues.

I urge you to begin a process of serious consideration, in the awareness of your own responsibility, to ensure that urgent agreements can be reached when the Conference begins the second part of its work this year. These include adjusting our rules of procedure so that the establishment of subsidiary bodies does not become a matter of substance and detract from the negotiating work with which we have been entrusted.

I believe that we should not get side-tracked in procedural discussions, when our duty is to agree on substantive matters relating to disarmament. Our peoples have a right to international peace and security. Let us perform our duty and reach the agreements necessary for the achievement of that peace and security.

At a time of intense and rapid globalization it is inconceivable to try to build islands that will suit each one of us. If we accept that there is no issue more universal or global than international peace and security, we must recognize our general and shared responsibility. We all have the right to build the future. We all have the obligation to preserve peace. We must all shoulder our responsibility and bring about nuclear disarmament. It is regrettable that nuclear disarmament today appears more a remote goal than in 1978, when we set out objectives and priorities in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Even if we acknowledge that some small progress has been made, the "effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament", which were urgently called for by the Assembly, appear to remain beyond our reach.

Mexico has been a fervent advocate of nuclear disarmament. The Tlatelolco Treaty freed Latin America and the Caribbean from the temptation of nuclear weapons and has served as an example for the establishment of other nuclear-weapon-free areas throughout the world.

Here I would like to refer to the statement we have just heard from the Minister of New Zealand. I do not think that the line ends at Ecuador. We are quite a bit further to the north and, therefore, we do not believe it is sufficient merely to acknowledge that the existence of nuclear weapons in the world is a real and actual danger; instead, we should step up our activities since this very existence could bring our civilization to an end. Nor can we forget the constant risk that nuclear weapons could be used, whether by accident or by mistake.

Apart from this danger, the availability of technology and materials related to the production of those weapons renders imperative the need for an unequivocal commitment to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Accordingly, we must adopt new approaches to reach this objective. If nuclear disarmament is to become a reality in this new millennium, now that we

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have seen the end of bipolar confrontation, we must put a stop to these doctrines of nuclear deterrence. Not only are these doctrines obsolete, they impede the establishment of a non-discriminatory and universal nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Let us recall that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons was conceived as an instrument that should be based on an acceptable balance of mutual responsibilities and obligations. Non-proliferation is not an end in itself, but a step in the right direction, towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons as a prior step, as a prelude to nuclear disarmament. For that reason, the horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons is a grave threat the consequences and dangers of which we dare not even contemplate.

Equally preoccupying are the dangers of vertical and qualitative proliferation. The abundance of fissile material and certain new technological discoveries also heighten the risks of nuclear proliferation in all its aspects.

The non-nuclear-weapon States find disheartening the continuing validity of doctrines of nuclear deterrence, as well as the fact that the security systems of the nuclear-weapon States still rest primarily on these weapons, even though the cold war has ended, the NPT has been indefinitely extended and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has been concluded. We believe that nuclear-weapon States have a special responsibility in implementing the NPT and that the non-proliferation regime should therefore be strengthened through nuclear disarmament measures.

In a few weeks, the Non-Proliferation Treaty will hold its sixth review conference. In all, 187 States parties will meet, for the first time since the indefinite extension was agreed upon, with the intention of reviewing, as objectively as possible, compliance with its provisions. The review will take place in the context of a series of differences and lack of consensus in the field of disarmament, which casts a shadow over the outcome of the meeting and the general situation of the non-proliferation regime and nuclear disarmament.

The environment surrounding the meeting is clouded by the failure of three out of the five official nuclear weapon States to ratify the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty and the absence of certain States with nuclear capacity, which is likely to hamper its entry into force. The beginning of negotiations on a treaty to prohibit fissile material for military purposes is also facing an impasse in the Conference on Disarmament and profound differences with regard to its scope.

Some of these elements are bound to affect the prospects for compliance with the provisions of the Treaty, such as the nuclear tests held in South-East Asia 1998; the insistence on doctrines of nuclear deterrence; the continuous upgrading of nuclear arsenals; and the faltering détente among nuclear States.

We are also concerned about the impact that might result from the plans to deploy an anti-missile defence system, which could hamper the strategic arms reduction process and trigger a new arms race.

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Faced with this rather discouraging prospect, we should mobilize and identify areas of common understanding. The success of this review conference, the first after the indefinite extension of the Treaty is crucial for the survival of the Treaty. We believe that support must be given to a renewed review process, reaffirming agreed principles and objectives and achieving agreements and specific commitments in nuclear disarmament.

In the twenty-first century, in the age of globalization, we must banish the threat of nuclear war and not shirk our shared responsibility in the field of nuclear disarmament. Instead we must seek the mechanisms to make it a reality. Good faith, mutual trust and the objective of peace and the common good must be the mainstay of our participation at that meeting.

Mexico is one of the group of countries that launched two years ago the initiative on a new agenda for nuclear disarmament, which proposes a modest programme for action to progress towards the most important objective set by the international community: the total and permanent elimination of nuclear weapons. This new agenda seeks progress in common undertakings; it seeks to change attitudes and approaches; it seeks to build a bridge towards the future, a bridge that will enable us to put cold war thinking behind us and to advance in the century of technology on the road to peace; it seeks to open up spaces, to facilitate agreements; it seeks to contribute to the common task of achieving disarmament. In short, it seeks to fulfil our obligation as responsible members of the international community.

The important contribution of the Group of 21 to efforts to identify a programme of work in this Conference, including the idea of establishing an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, should not be discounted. We regret that the flexibility of our group did not elicit a comparable response from other groups. We will continue to insist on this, however, as it is our responsibility to do so. We are convinced that it is imperative to approach the issue of nuclear disarmament as a matter of urgency and that this is the right forum for that.

Allow me, Sir, to turn to another topic requiring our urgent attention: the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Technological developments have made an arms race in outer space possible. Mexico believes that space must be reserved exclusively for peaceful uses that benefit humankind and that an arms race must be prevented.

We are convinced that today, more than ever before, the 1967 Treaty on the Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, is still valid. This instrument establishes that outer space is not subject to national appropriation. As States parties to the Treaty, we have undertaken not to place in orbit around the Earth any objects carrying nuclear weapons or any other kinds of weapon of mass destruction, not to install such weapons on celestial bodies and not to station such weapons in outer space in any other manner. The provisions of the existing legal instruments in this area are limited in scope, however, and may prove insufficient to prevent the deployment of other types of weapons in out space.

Since the subject of the prevention of an arms race in outer space was taken up in the Conference on Disarmament in 1985, we have exchanged views on a range of relevant

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definitions, principles, existing treaties and confidence-building measures and we have gathered a wealth of experience in this area. Mexico considers that the time has come to move forward in banning the establishment of military bases, facilities or fortification for military uses, and also with regard to the testing and deployment of any category of weapon in outer space.

Consequently, I propose that the Conference establish, as a matter of the highest priority, an ad hoc committee to negotiate and conclude an international legal instrument on the prohibition of the testing, deployment and use of weapons and weapons systems and/or their components in outer space that would help prevent an arms race in space. The twenty-first century must consolidate the commitment to peace and use all technologies to benefit humankind and not to destroy it.

The negotiations to develop a verification protocol to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxic Weapons and on Their Destruction have reached a critical phase. Mexico has insisted that the ad hoc group entrusted with negotiating the protocol should fully discharge its mandate, including the establishment of international cooperation mechanisms. We hope that a cooperation committee is established within the future organization for the prohibition of biological weapons, and that this committee will be responsible for promoting, coordinating and reviewing the cooperation activities of the States parties and promoting the effective and complete implementation of the Convention's provisions. The protocol should also cover the regulation of transfers of technology for peaceful purposes and include appropriate provisions for cooperation.

Mexico has participated in various international initiatives on the problem of conventional weapons, particularly with regard to their link to violence and insecurity. Our Governments and civil society have recognized the need for urgent action to prevent threats to international peace and security resulting from the excessive availability and uncontrolled use of small arms and light weapons.

At the regional level, Mexico sponsored the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and other Related Materials, which entered into force on 1 July 1998 and whose Advisory Committee was established just a few days ago. Its objective is to eliminate the illicit traffic in these weapons that, unfortunately, has developed in our region in connection with drug trafficking and organized crime. We have also adopted bilateral and multilateral cooperation measures to this end.

In the United Nations we are promoting the adoption, this year, of a protocol against the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, within the Ad Hoc Committee in Vienna entrusted with the elaboration of a convention against transnational organized crime.

We are convinced that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons affects all countries one way or another and that their availability must be curtailed if violence is to be avoided. Accordingly, Mexico has also taken an active part in the Panel of Governmental

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Experts of the United Nations and in the work of the Preparatory Committee of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons in All their Aspects, which met recently in New York. We hope that this Conference will adopt a programme of action that envisages the implementation of a series of national, regional and international cooperation and coordination measures and mechanisms to prevent and combat the illicit trafficking in and production of small arms and light weapons, as well as to ensure that weapons originating from illicit traffic, when they become illicit weapons, are detected, confiscated and destroyed.

In the United Nations we have also participated in the creation of the Register of Conventional Arms and we regularly provide information. We are also part of the group of experts looking into a possible expansion of the Register to include new categories of weapons and to widen its scope so that it covers the issue of transparency vis-à-vis weapons of mass destruction.

At the regional level and on a Mexican initiative, a working group was established, within the Rio Group, on the limitation of conventional weapons. This group recently held its third meeting in Mexico and it is endeavouring to formulate a proposal for the possible adoption of measures to strengthen confidence and transparency relating to the acquisition, transfer, production and possession of offensive conventional weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean. This will require, following the model of the Tlatelolco Treaty, the support of the countries which supply Latin America with offensive conventional weapons in respecting the self-control measures, which may be established.

Allow me, Sir, to stress, once again, how vital it is that the Conference on Disarmament overcome its deadlock. We cannot keep revisiting the same procedural discussions year in year out, while we witness how in other forums progress is made on subjects that we should be dealing with here. Our inability to reach agreements on our priorities has left us paralysed. We have taken up precious time re-establishing agreements that we had already achieved. The Conference should not lose its relevance. It must mend its procedures and adopt a new pragmatic and realistic approach so that progress can be made in specific nuclear disarmament measures.

We could begin by adopting the suggestion of the delegation of Chile to the effect that, once the establishment of a subsidiary body has been decided, that body should continue its work until it has fulfilled its mandate without the need to re-establish it every year. We should not forget that, with the failure of the Conference, we are helping to endanger international peace and security.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Mexico for her important statement and for her kind words addressed to the President.

I now call on the distinguished representative of Canada, Ambassador Westdal.

Mr. WESTDAL (Canada): I hasten to use this, my first formal opportunity, to congratulate you on your office and your conduct and to assure you of Canada's support, cooperation - and empathy - as you wrestle with the knotted immobility of our Conference.

I take the floor having just returned from a week in Canada, where I appeared before our Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs to discuss Canada's nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament policy. I also visited eight cities on a public-speaking and media tour to depict and debate with Canadians our Government's policy and action to protect our security against the threats of nuclear arsenals and to fulfil our treaty and ethical obligations to help control, reduce, prohibit and eliminate them. We believe the fresh air and frank scrutiny of public consultations can animate and enrich our foreign policy.

I told the Canadians I reached what Minister Axworthy and our Department were doing, above all, to keep the promises of the NPT. I discussed our objectives for the coming Review Conference: universality, agreed principles and objectives, stronger mechanisms for review, and the generation of global conviction and political will through an enhanced public and political profile for the Treaty and for the Review Conference.

Our active hope is that, whatever its formal outcome, the Conference will send a signal of concern and commitment powerful enough to escape the confines of the United Nations and reach and sway capitals and people beyond. Canada wants the Review Conference to succeed by generating the kind of political energy, will and leadership required in capitals - and, through them, in multilateral organs like ours - to restore momentum to faltering nuclear arms control and to correct the course of currently deteriorating disarmament trends.

There was much emphasis in public discussion on action to implement Canadian policy to devalue the political currency of nuclear weapons, whether in NATO, as in the review now under way with our active support, or in South Asia where we resist according status and rewarding proliferation with prestige.

Reviewing the broad background to the NPT Review, we talked about good news - and bad. We found hope in prospects for major power amity, in START weapon dismantlement and in strengthened safeguards, for example, but we found much to undermine that hope for a safer world in recent proliferation, in the re-rationalization of nuclear arsenals, in the derailment of the CTBT, in START's stop, in stubborn faith in nuclear deterrence and in pride and presumed status in the possession of nuclear weapons (astonishing pride, where shame should be, for those arsenals are after all the means of massive indiscriminate killing).

Everywhere I went, people wanted to talk about nuclear deterrence and the grave risks apparent in the incoherent threat at its heart to use unusable weapons, in its assumption of rationality and in its brittle inadaptability to dynamic global security circumstances.

Among Canadian's concerns about the prospective future course of nuclear-weapon attitudes, policies and arsenals was naturally the paralysis of our Conference. I hastened to explain to my listeners that, in the absence of political will, leadership and instructions, we were

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no more able to negotiate arms control and disarmament agreements than professional teams were able to play ball in the absence of a functioning league and an agreed schedule of games. People replied that they knew we could not do everything, but asked why that had to mean we could not do anything. They knew we could not solve every problem, but wondered why that had to mean we could not solve any - why we could not even bring ourselves to talk about any.

The facts speak for themselves. For four years, we have negotiated nothing. For the second year in a row, we have failed to agree to a work programme. Since late last century, we have been confined to sterile debate about the implementation of two specific points of a draft programme of work. Like it or not, this record calls our very purpose into question in public opinion and in considered assessments of our work, our credibility, our potential and our prospects.

I explained our deadlock with reference to rigid attitudes (in defining consensus or in insisting on all or nothing, as examples) and, more specifically, with reference to layered knots, some obscuring others, in conflicting approaches to three key issues - nuclear disarmament, the prevention of an arms race in outer space and fissile material control. Some delegations see blocking progress in one or more of these fields as more important than achieving progress in any of the others. Some delegations refuse to abandon goals much opposed by one or more other delegations, even at the cost of blocking all movement. Some delegations clearly accord regional solidarity higher effective priority than progress in any of these fields. And some delegations see the Conference on Disarmament as a useful forum for scoring diplomatic points in disarmament issues actually managed elsewhere, injury to our prospects here notwithstanding.

In a consensus-based organization, such a tangle of attitudes and approaches, combined with mutual miscalculations of priorities and depths of commitment, is a sure recipe for prolonged stalemate. Faith is lost in win-win solutions - indeed, the sum of the game is thought less than zero. Given these constraints, the key question faced by those who want us to get back to work is how our various perceptions and goals can be realigned to permit consensus on a return to substance.

It is not, after all, as though there were any shortage of problems for us to tackle. Nor is it as though there were not much at stake - including the credibility and future of this unique, arguably irreplaceable, multilateral arms control and negotiating body, so long as it so patently fails to earn its keep.

One key question is how to resolve apparently irreconcilable differences without "dumbing down" proposals so far that some committed members find them unacceptable. One unacceptable degradation for us, for example, would be the loss of an FMCT Ad Hoc Committee with full negotiating powers. A fissile material cut-off treaty has been a Canadian priority for decades. Moreover, it was one of the key promises in the Principles and Objectives of the NPT's indefinite extension five years ago.

(Mr. Westdal, Canada)

Other Canadian priorities have long been plain. Delegations will recall, for example, that we tabled two proposals last year for Conference on Disarmament action on nuclear disarmament and on PAROS. We recognize that these proposals do not now represent a basis for possible consensus. We have not, however, conditioned our acceptance of any and all work in the Conference on Disarmament upon everyone else's acceptance of our terms and our terms only. That is why we have been prepared to support the Dembri package - and to consider even the Belgian proposal on nuclear disarmament (though not if it were linked to any FMCT retrogression).

We believe that, in the continuing absence of consensus on our programme of work as a whole, we should nonetheless be able to act in specific fields, whether top priority or not, where there is consensus for progress. We note that the insistence by some delegations on a so-called "comprehensive and balanced programme of work" has no basis whatever in the Conference's rules of procedure. We are prepared to proceed appropriately on each item, separately or in combination, with no linkages and no rigid packaging. We think this approach would permit modest progress and generate useful confidence and momentum. It would also reduce emerging speculation and potential pressure to abandon this shop and move elements of its work elsewhere.

We are realists. We know that some delegations are not now ready to resume substantive work in specific fields. We do not accept, though, that this means nothing can be done in any field until every delegation is ready. We think the approach which our distinguished colleague, Ambassador Illanes of Chile, suggested last year is worth further exploration. It would have our President simply organize unofficial consultations (without records or official documentation) open to all delegations and observers in the Conference on Disarmament on each item of the agenda. We think that could help us find bases for official substantive discussion and in due course for specific negotiations.

We also serve those who stand and wait. We serve while we wait for the dangers to be recognized in indefinitely extended faith in nuclear deterrence, in NPT fidelity gaps, in faltering nuclear arms control and in proliferation. We serve while we wait for that recognition to sink in, for it to stir public opinion and generate political will and energy. And we serve while we wait for that political change to change our instructions, to unchain our potential, to get us back to fruitful work.

What counts here now is the quality of our service. Professional diplomats all, with mandates as grave as can be, we serve truly, while we wait, only if we do our own utmost to get those grave dangers we confront recognized. We serve truly, while we wait, only if we ourselves spare no effort to bring that recognition home to our Governments and our citizens and let it register, let it engender political will and leadership. We serve truly, while we wait, only if, through the intergovernmental interaction that we mediate here, we make this Conference itself a seedbed of political energy and commitment. We serve truly, while we wait, only if we ourselves - uniquely placed to see, to speak and to be heard - move heaven and earth to get this body back to good work.

(Mr. Westdal, Canada)

If our lot here is to negotiate, let us bring our professional best to bear, in the fine tradition of our predecessors. If our lot is talk, then let us do that well too, with heads open to truth and hearts to common ground. And if our lot is the canaries' in the mine or the lemmings' at the cliff's edge, then let us voice our warning loud and force a change in course.

These are the attitudes that guide Canada's delegation through these frustrating days. This is the spirit we will take to the NPT Review Conference and put to work for the political success of that meeting. And this is the determination with which we will return here this summer to resume these significant endeavours.

If collectively we go on failing, if we lose the chance now still before us for radical reductions in nuclear weapons and decisive disarmament progress, if we give our children and theirs no real hope of escape from grave nuclear danger, if we thus end up with roles in such a massive betrayal of hope, let it never fairly be said that it was for any lack of our trying, here, now.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the representative of Canada for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the President. Distinguished delegates, as you know, Ambassador Illanes of Chile will soon be leaving Geneva, after representing his country in this Conference for nearly three years. During that time he demonstrated a true determination to achieve a convergence of views on the Conference's programme of work. His firmness of purpose and his hard work was recognized with his appointment in 1998 as Special Coordinator for the improved and effective functioning of the Conference and, in this capacity, he has demonstrated his well-known diplomatic skills. I am certain that you all, that the entire Conference will want to join me in wishing him and his family the very best for the future and, with those words, I give you the floor, Ambassador Illanes.

Mr. ILLANES (Chile) (translated from Spanish): I thank you sincerely for your very warm and kind words regarding me and the work that I have done here in the Conference. In turn, I too would like to congratulate you and offer you my best wishes for a successful presidency and my hope that, during your term of office, you really succeed in relaunching the work of this Conference, which is so important. I would also like to thank those who have preceded you this year as President and who also made great efforts to secure agreement on a programme of work for the Conference. Together with them, you form part of a chain of Presidents who, for more than three years, have tried to break the deadlock in our work, sadly, to no avail. Now the time has come for me to leave Geneva and I must concede, with regret, that a body of such importance for world peace is still faced by a serious stalemate.

Over the past three years I have had the privilege of working alongside representatives, such as yourselves, with the highest diplomatic and intellectual skills. I have been able not only to appreciate those skills but also the sincere and repeated efforts you have made on behalf of the noble objectives of disarmament. At the same time, we have always enjoyed the most valuable support of the Secretary-General, Mr. Petrovsky, and the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr.Bensmail, and their colleagues in the secretariat. I have also shared your frustrations at seeing our work paralysed by factors beyond our control.

(Mr. Illanes, Chile)

It is obvious that this paralysis is not the exclusive preserve of the Conference on Disarmament. The preparatory process of the NPT Review Conference has clearly demonstrated this and it is not surprising that, on the eve of that conference, the prospects of its success are meagre.

I do not intend to revisit the numerous proposals that have come before the Conference over the past three years in the hope of having a programme of work adopted. Notwithstanding the diplomatic skills deployed in the preparation of these proposals, they have not succeeded in overcoming the main obstacle - the controversy that has been going on for years between countries which want to discuss nuclear disarmament with the aim of arriving at a convention that prohibits nuclear weapons and certain others, mainly nuclear Powers, which are opposed to this, maintaining that this matter, even though it is formally part of the Conference's agenda, can only be dealt with in direct negotiations among the nuclear Powers themselves. In addition to this, another serious difficulty has emerged with the differences of view on the important issue of the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

This situation has led some delegations to seek reforms to the Conference's procedures, as a means of helping it start its substantive work.

Of course, we cannot be so naive as to believe that the mere better handling of the work process of the Conference on Disarmament, which could be achieved through certain reforms designed to improve or rationalize its procedures, would in itself produce meaningful progress in the results of our work. It is clear that there is a correlation between the productivity of this body and the conditions of harmony or tension and mistrust that prevail among the great Powers or even among the other actors in the international arena. Nevertheless, many delegations believe it possible that, even under the present unpromising circumstances, the improvement and modernization of procedures and methods of work of the Conference could boost the chances of success of our efforts to end the deadlock and to resume work.

With these considerations in mind, the Chilean delegation has proposed to the Conference the possibility and the advantage of agreeing upon certain functional arrangements of a limited scope which, without altering the current rules of procedure, would nevertheless enable the Conference to carry out meaningful work in preparing the ground and facilitating subsequent negotiations on various items of its agenda.

We might recall that, towards the end of the Conference's 1997 session, the Chilean delegation presented various ideas based on this reasoning. Later, in March 1998, as you were kind enough to recall, I was appointed Special Coordinator for the improved and effective functioning of the Conference and, in September of that year, I reported to the Conference on the outcome of the consultations carried out in fulfilment of that mandate. In those consultations several possibilities were explored, including one involving the establishment of certain more or less permanent committees or working groups, for each agenda item, on the understanding that such a step would in no way imply a commitment to initiate any specific negotiations at a later stage. The purpose of those groups was "to clarify national positions while seeking to promote convergences".

(Mr. Illanes, Chile)

These consultations with the Conference on Disarmament delegations and observers were very interesting and a large number of comments were formulated. The idea itself was widely supported but it also raised doubts among several delegations and even a few negative reactions. That was also the case with other ideas and proposals that were discussed during those consultations. A general argument against those ideas was the reluctance of many delegations to do anything which would require a reform of the rules of procedure of the Conference.

I informed the Conference about the general agreement among delegations to continue examining the question of the more effective functioning of the Conference in the 1999 session and the general support for presidential "troika" practice, and also about the unanimous recognition of the merit of the informal consultations carried out by the President in order to facilitate progress in the work of the Conference.

In the light of the above, in August 1999 the Chilean delegation presented to the Conference an informal proposal suggesting that it should be the President of the Conference who would organize consultations on each item of the agenda and that these consultations would be informal and confidential discussions. The President himself could lead these discussions, or delegate this task to one or more "friends of the Chair". The consultations would have no records or any kind of official documentation and would be open to all delegations and observers of the Conference on Disarmament.

It could of course be argued that the President already has weekly informal consultations with the coordinators of the regional groups. This is true, but these deal with the programme of work, not with the substance of the agenda items and they are restricted to the coordinators of the groups. In our proposal the President would be exercising his power to convene informal consultations on a more regular and broad basis.

In our proposal, all countries could participate in the presidential consultations, enriching them with their ideas. At the same time, these consultations would be more focused than the current ones, as they would consider each agenda item. These consultations could be organized in a very flexible manner. For instance, preference could be given to items that may seem, at a given moment, to be more interesting or promising than others. Perhaps one meeting a week could serve the purpose of keeping alive an informal exchange of views on the substance of the broad range of items on the Conference's agenda. This, we hope, could contribute to a gradual consensus building on the various aspects of disarmament.

It is clear to everyone that the Conference on Disarmament is a negotiating body and that we must not transform it into a forum for endless debates or for "talks about talks". The discussions that we are suggesting would not have this undesirable nature, however, since they would take place in a strictly informal and confidential framework, enabling us to move forward in studying and reflecting upon the complex substantive aspects and options of each agenda item.

(Mr. Illanes, Chile)

The delegation of Chile has put this idea before the Conference in the hope of facilitating its functioning and we do not think that it would require any change in the rules of procedure: what it needs is political will. We do sincerely believe that this could, to a certain extent, help us reach the important objective of this irreplaceable forum. It is precisely at difficult times such as the present that the need arises to reformulate past practices by adapting them to the present reality.

Forgive me for having insisted yet again on these ideas, on which there was no full consensus in the past. I have done so in the hope that yet another year of frustration and inaction of the Conference, added to the previous years, to which the three speakers before me have referred so eloquently, might persuade those delegations which previously had doubts to reconsider the possibility of offering the Conference on Disarmament the opportunity to do useful and substantive work. With its entirely informal nature, this approach would not in any way affect the negotiating positions of the various countries, but, instead, would enable them to exchange ideas, explore alternatives and move forward towards the objectives of disarmament. I would like to conclude by expressing my fervent wish that the Conference may soon get under way again.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the representative of Chile for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President, and I thank him yet again for his contribution to ideas about how to develop our working methods and wish him every success for the future. I now give the floor to the representatives of the Russian Federation, Ambassador Sidorov.

Mr. SIDOROV (Russian Federation) (translated from Russian): Allow me to thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the floor and to use this opportunity to congratulate you on your assumption of this important post, to wish you every success and to assure you of my delegation's readiness for constructive cooperation.

The work on the Conference on Disarmament in the year 2000 is taking place against the background of a tricky international situation. The negative factors are well known. They were bound also to influence the effective functioning of our forum, which is so sensitive to what is happening in the world. Regrettably, it has to be noted that the Conference has not begun its substantive work by the end of the first part of this session. Nevertheless, I should like to express the hope that the participants in the Conference will be able to agree on its programme of work. All premises are in place to do so.

The Russian delegation, as is well known, has always been committed to constructive cooperation. It has more than once come up with compromise approaches with a view to finding mutually acceptable solutions to topical international disarmament issues. We are ready to continue such cooperation and to work for results in the Conference on Disarmament.

The issues of safeguarding international security, strengthening the regime of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and ensuring further progress in the area of multilateral disarmament have always been the focus of Russia's

(Mr. Sidorov, Russian Federation)

foreign policy. As a State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and as one of its depositories, the Russian Federation considers the NPT to be a time-tested instrument, which has become one of the main pillars of the system of international security. It is precisely the NPT which is primarily responsible for containing the spread of nuclear weapons while ensuring the development of international cooperation in the area of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

In this connection, we attach high importance to the forthcoming NPT Review Conference. It is designed to take stock of the results of the implementation of the Treaty over the past five years and to outline the main prospects for the operation of the NPT regime.

Taking into account the obligations assumed under article VI of the Treaty, Russia is taking the successive steps towards the ultimate goal of complete nuclear disarmament. The Russian Federation is doing so both on a unilateral basis and on a bilateral basis with the United States of America.

The treaty between the USSR and the United States on the Elimination of their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles (INF) was a major step towards the reduction of nuclear weapons. Within the framework of this Treaty, land-based missiles of two classes with the range from 500 to 5,500 km were completely eliminated and a ban imposed on their production and testing.

The Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (START I), which entered into force on 5 December 1994, was a landmark achievement in reducing nuclear weapons. In the implementation of its unilateral initiatives and in fulfilment of the START I Treaty, Russia has taken a number of major steps, which have resulted in a significant reduction of its nuclear arsenal. Most important, this reduction is irreversible. By now, more than 930 launchers for ICBMs and SLBMs have been eliminated in Russia under the START I Treaty, as well as about 2,000 missiles for such launchers, 24 nuclear submarines and more than 80 heavy bombers. Overall, the strategic nuclear forces of Russia will be reduced by approximately 40 per cent under that Treaty.

The START II Treaty, signed on 3 January 1993, provides for an even more substantial reduction in the nuclear arsenals of Russia and the United States - down to 3,000-3,500 warheads. Multiple-re-entry-vehicle ICBMs will be eliminated in accordance with the Treaty. As a result of the implementation of the agreements reached, strategic offensive arms in Russia and the United States will be reduced overall by two thirds, as compared to 1990 levels.

Active work is being conducted now in the State Duma of the Russian Federation on ratification of the START II Treaty. The process of examination of the Treaty is rather difficult, as the Treaty touches on the very foundations of the State's military security. It has already been suspended twice, as you know, through no fault of ours.

(Mr. Sidorov, Russian Federation)

The agreements reached in New York in September 1997 concerning the ABM Treaty and the extension of the implementation schedule for the START II Treaty will serve as a spur to ratification. These agreements have already been submitted to the State Duma for ratification. The United States has not concluded the START II ratification process either as it has not as yet ratified the above-mentioned New York agreements.

In March 1997, the Presidents of Russia and the United States agreed on further sweeping steps in the area of arms reduction within the framework of the START III Treaty. It is envisaged that each party's nuclear capacities should be reduced to 2,000-2,500 warheads by the end of 2007. In addition, we are ready to consider the reduction of the parties' nuclear capacities, within the START III Treaty, to 1,500 warheads. In so doing, our basic assumption is that the START III Treaty will be designed to serve the purposes of the further strengthening of strategic stability, the elaboration of measures to promote the irreversibility of deep reductions in strategic arms and confidence-building.

As for tactical nuclear weapons, in keeping with the statements by the President of the USSR of 5 October 1991 and the President of the Russian Federation of 29 January 1992, Russia has been fully and consistently implementing its declared unilateral initiatives. By now, all tactical nuclear weapons have been removed from surface ships and multipurpose submarines, as well as from naval land-based aircraft, and placed in centralized storage facilities. One third of the total quantity of nuclear munitions for tactical sea-based missiles and naval aircraft have been eliminated. The destruction of nuclear warheads of tactical missiles, artillery shells and nuclear mines is nearing completion. Half the total number of nuclear warheads for anti-aircraft missiles and of nuclear air bombs have been destroyed.

All nuclear weapons located outside Russia have been brought back to its territory and their elimination has begun. In this connection, I should like to draw attention once again to the Russian proposal to the effect that all nuclear weapons should be taken back to the territories of the nuclear States to which they belong.

Being committed to the policy of strengthening the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and disarmament, the Russian Federation considers it necessary to increase the effectiveness of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). It is to be regretted, of course, that the United States has not ratified the CTBT. We hope, however, that the United States Administration has not given up and will undertake more efforts to that end. For its part, the Russian Government, has submitted the CTBT to the State Duma for ratification.

We are convinced that the next step in strengthening the international nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime should consist in the elaboration of a multilateral agreement on the prohibition of the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. Russia supports an early start of negotiations to this end in the Conference on Disarmament and the re-establishment of an appropriate ad hoc committee. In the context of those negotiations, we would like to emphasize that in Russia, for a number of years, there has been no production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons.

(Mr. Sidorov, Russian Federation)

The Russian Federation has always supported and continues to support the just aspirations of the non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT that they be provided with assurances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapon. The implementation of that task is, without question, a complicated matter, requiring concerted effort and the political will of all States taking part in the discussion of this issue. It is also essential to choose the right approach to establishing the priorities for this work and the venue where it is to be conducted.

For its part, Russia does not see any multilateral negotiating forum other than the Conference on Disarmament which could address this problem. For that reason we support the re-establishment in the Conference of an appropriate official committee with the same mandate as before. Nor do we object to the elaboration in the Conference on Disarmament of a global agreement on negative security assurances, provided it takes into account our fundamental reservations with regard to the cases where nuclear weapons could be used in order to repel aggression.

We should also like to reaffirm our readiness, in principle, to enlarge the range of countries that benefit from the system of security assurances which is already in place, by stepping up the process of creating nuclear-weapon-free zones, subject to the non-nuclear countries giving their commitment not to acquire, not to station and not to deploy nuclear weapons in their territories. Today the NSA regime covers 107 States. We support the continuation of this process.

In general, the Russian Federation, as before, is seriously committed to cooperation with other delegations on issues of nuclear disarmament and has repeatedly demonstrated its flexibility and readiness for compromises. At the same time, we do not consider this an appropriate juncture, for the purposes of nuclear disarmament, to start work in the Conference on a programme of nuclear disarmament within specified time-frames. In our view, it would be more productive to follow a smooth, step-by-step transition from bilateral to quinquelateral and then multilateral agreements in the area of nuclear disarmament taking into account emerging international realities.

In my recent statement in this hall, I had the opportunity to share with my colleagues the Russian approach to the problems of the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Notwithstanding that statement, I feel I must once again say a few words on this subject, as we consider it extremely important.

Deep cuts in strategic offensive arms are only possible in a world when strategic stability is maintained. The 1972 ABM treaty is the central element of the entire structure of arrangements in the area of nuclear disarmament and the basis for the maintenance of strategic stability and international security. Preservation of the basic provisions of this treaty would help prevent the emergence of a whole class of space weapons, namely, ABM weapons; it would help strengthen the ban on the introduction of weapons of mass destruction in outer space. At the current time, however, there is a real threat of the existing arrangements being disrupted. The reasons for this are well known.

(Mr. Sidorov, Russian Federation)

In this connection, the speedy elaboration of an international legal regime prohibiting the introduction of strike weapons in outer space should become one of the principal tasks of the world community. We support the efforts of the participants of the Group of 21, our Chinese colleagues, and favour, like them, the early re-establishment in the Conference on Disarmament of an ad hoc committee with a negotiating mandate.

Here I should like once more to draw the attention of delegations to the well-known Russian initiative for the creation of a global system to control the non-proliferation of missiles and missile technologies. The international meeting of experts held on this issue in Moscow last week proved to be very useful.

We believe that now, on the eve of the NPT Review Conference, each participant of the bilateral and multilateral treaties which form an integral part of the holistic system of nuclear disarmament and which will ensure the implementation of the obligations under article 6 of the NPT, should do their utmost to strengthen these treaties, and not to destroy them.

The Russian Federation supports the process of a truly global ban on anti-personnel landmines (APLs). At the current time, we are working hard to prepare the ratification of the amended, "landmines" Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. Even so, we are already partly implementing in practice a number of its provisions, especially those relating to mine-clearance activities. We have repeatedly affirmed, including at the highest level, our support for the noble goals of the Ottawa Convention.

We view the complete ban on mines as a goal which we should move towards via a series of agreed phases. The first, as we see it, could be a ban on the transfer of APLs. By stopping the spread of mines at a global level, we will be able significantly to limit their uncontrolled use, which is the main cause of landmine disasters.

Today, there is probably no alternative forum to the Conference on Disarmament which could enlist the involvement in negotiations of key producers and users of APLs, and also achieve constructive cooperation between States parties and non-parties to the Ottawa Convention.

In this context, we express our readiness to discuss, under item 6 of the Conference's agenda - the comprehensive programme of disarmament, the question of a gradual prohibition of APLs. As a first step in this direction, the CD could take up the elaboration of a universal agreement banning the transfer of APLs. At the same time, we are convinced that the landmine problem needs to be resolved in a comprehensive way, taking into account the real defence-related and economic capabilities of each State and its geopolitical situation.

Russia attaches great importance to the issue of transparency in conventional armaments, since it recognizes its positive role in creating a climate of confidence among different countries. Transparency in arms deliveries could be a key tool for preventing the destabilizing stockpiling of arms and for averting armed conflicts. We think that it would be useful, for the purposes of

(Mr. Sidorov, Russian Federation)

checking the destabilizing process of stockpiling conventional arms, if that transparency came first of all from importers, because it is precisely for them - rather than for exporters - that information on arms procurement is more sensitive in terms of national security.

Much work has already been done in this regard in the disarmament process. We believe that, in considering this issue, the Conference on Disarmament should define its role and possible contribution, in order to avoid duplicating efforts undertaken in other international forums.

As to the organizational aspect of the Conference's operation, the Russian delegation would not object to the re-establishment of the posts, which existed in 1998, of Special Coordinators on the expansion of its membership, on its improved and effective functioning, and also on its agenda. There is certainly room for improvement in the work of the Conference. But here, too, it is necessary to grasp clearly the limits beyond which attempts at constructive work become counterproductive. In particular, we, like many others, have opposed and will continue to oppose any attempts to abrogate, weaken or revise the rule whereby decisions are taken by the Conference only on the basis of consensus.

Disarmament issues are, without question, complex and their solution demands from all States the necessary will, realism and readiness for compromise. All this places an added responsibility upon us. We are confident that, with your experience and under your wise guidance, the work of the Conference will be given additional impetus in the second part of its session. You may count on our full cooperation.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now call upon the representative of Germany, Ambassador Seibert.

Mr. SEIBERT (Germany): May I first, in my national capacity, congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference and assure you of the full support of my delegation in your important and difficult tasks. I trust that your well-known diplomatic skills and experience will facilitate tackling this daunting challenge. I would also like to express my deep appreciation for all the intensive efforts undertaken by your predecessors, Ambassadors Kreid and Chowdhury, to move the Conference forward.

I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, the Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

As the first part of the session of the Conference on Disarmament of the new millennium draws to a close, we have to conclude that we have yet again been unable to start substantive

(Mr. Seibert, Germany)

work in the Conference on Disarmament. The continued inability of the Conference to reach agreement on substantive work is a source of deep concern to us. We do, however, remain of the opinion that agreement is within reach. In the different proposals which were put forward in 1999 and during this year, there were a number of common elements. These are:

(a) The re-establishment of the ad hoc committee under agenda item 1 to negotiate, on the basis of the report of the Special Coordinator (CD/1299) and the mandate contained therein, a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices;

(b) The re-establishment of the ad hoc committee under agenda item 4 to negotiate with a view to reaching agreement on effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons;

(c) The reappointment of a Special Coordinator under agenda item 6 to seek the views of the members of the Conference on the most appropriate way to deal with the questions related to anti-personnel mines, taking into account, inter alia, developments outside the Conference;

(d) The reappointment of a Special Coordinator under agenda item 7, entitled "Transparency in armaments", to seek the views of the members of the Conference on the most appropriate way to deal with questions related to this item;

(e) The reappointment of Special Coordinators to consider the review of the agenda of the Conference, the expansion of its membership, and its improved and effective functioning.

There is also agreement within the Conference to deal with the issues of nuclear disarmament and prevention of an arms race in outer space, although the most appropriate mechanisms and their mandates remain to be determined.

We propose that the Conference on Disarmament now take a decision to start substantive work on the five common elements listed above. With regard to the two important outstanding issues, nuclear disarmament and prevention of an arms race in outer space, we support the continuation of intensive consultations to find early agreement on how to deal with these matters, including mandates and mechanisms that could be established by the Conference on Disarmament. We will continue to make every effort to this end, taking into account past proposals and future initiatives.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the representative of Germany for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands, Ambassador Sanders.

Mr. SANDERS (Netherlands): As this is the first time that I take the floor in a plenary session of the Conference, I should like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your nomination and express my full confidence in your professionalism to provide the appropriate guidance to help the Conference to make progress on its thorny path.

I have asked for the floor today to underscore the importance that the Netherlands traditionally attaches to arms control and disarmament. We do this in good faith and with a considerable degree of flexibility. We like to be perceived as compromise-seekers and bridge-builders. But this does not mean that we have no ideals and convictions. The Netherlands Government aims to strike the right balance between idealism and realism. In order to realize our ideals we need to be realistic about what is feasible in today's world and what is not.

An important example is nuclear disarmament. We strongly support the goal and ideal of a world without nuclear weapons, and we support every effort to get there. At the same time our realism tells us that this has to be a gradual process: arms reductions and disarmament are one and the same process, with the latter following from the relentless pursuit of the former.

I will return to nuclear issues later, but let me first give you a brief account of our ambitions and priorities in other areas of disarmament and arms control.

In the important area of small arms and light weapons, my country has been an active player. We have undertaken several initiatives within a number of international bodies like the European Union, the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). We were not overjoyed with the outcome of the recent session of the Preparatory Committee in New York, and we really want to appeal to all States to participate constructively in order to make better progress at the subsequent sessions of the Preparatory Committee. The Netherlands, for its part, will engage in inter-sessional discussions with all interested countries aimed at getting the procedural and substantive preparations for the 2001 Conference back on track. A successful outcome of that Conference will give an important impetus to regional and global efforts to curb the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and the destabilizing consequences of the excessive accumulation of small arms.

Our priority in the area of landmines is obviously the successful implementation and the promotion of the universality of the Ottawa Convention. We have contributed substantially to mine-clearing operations in various parts of the world and we will continue to do so. We hope to play a leading role in the Standing Committee on Mine Clearance that was established in Maputo. We are presently chairing the United Nations Mine Action Support Group, just to give a few specific examples.

A third area of priority in the field of conventional arms is our support for the United Nations Arms Register. We are actively participating in the Group of Governmental Experts. The Register currently covers more than 90 per cent of the transfers of conventional

(Mr. Sanders, Netherlands)

armaments, but we hope that its participation and scope can be further enhanced. The register should continue to be a tool for conventional arms control. But we fully agree that transparency in armaments should not be limited to conventional weapons, and should also pertain to weapons of mass destruction.

In the field of chemical weapons-related declarations, we can say that we have achieved the maximum of transparency among the State parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention. We hope that many of you will have an opportunity to visit the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in The Hague. You will be impressed by the effectiveness and efficiency of this organization. There is no need for a register on Chemical Weapons: the Organization is in fact the register.

It is our ambition to achieve the same degree of transparency in the field of biological and toxin weapons-related declarations, on which a protocol is being negotiated not far from here. We do not deny that there are differences between chemical weapons and biological weapons, but still we think that we must try to achieve the maximum degree of compliance control through effective and realistic measures. Our commitment to these negotiations is also reflected in our bid to host the future organization for the implementation of the Protocol in The Hague.

This brings me to the third category of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear weapons, which is the main topic of my statement today. Just as for all other categories of weapons, transparency in the field of nuclear weapons is a priority item for the Netherlands. I will come back to this, but let me first make a number of general observations concerning nuclear disarmament.

For the Netherlands, the NPT Review Conference is a singularly important event on this year's arms control and disarmament calendar. We concede that the political landscape does not look particularly inviting at the moment. This, however, means to us that an even more active engagement is necessary, to achieve genuine progress on the road towards nuclear disarmament. We believe that the existing agenda for nuclear disarmament, as laid down in the Principles and Objectives agreed in 1995, is still an adequate vehicle for making progress. The point is that we need to revitalize it.

We think that a concerted effort by the nuclear-weapon States is a necessary condition for this revitalization. We have no doubt about the sincerity of the two nuclear-weapon States with the largest arsenals further to reduce these in the context of START II and in future negotiations on START III and beyond. But we hope to see some tangible progress ion the weeks to come.

We are concerned about the prospects for the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, which was successfully negotiated in 1996 under the chairmanship of one of my predecessors, Ambassador Ramaker. We hope that the non-ratification by the United States Congress will not cause delays in the ratification process of other signatory parties, including many non-nuclear-weapon States. We call on all those countries in this Conference that have not signed the Treaty to do so soon.

(Mr. Sanders, Netherlands)

On procedural issues of the NPT Review Conference, we have no strong views. We think that we should avoid wasting time and energy at the Conference itself on these issues, and we very much encourage the president-designate to clear those issues before the Review Conference starts. We can support the establishment of subsidiary bodies, provided that they have added value. They should not meet simultaneously with the respective main committees, and their lifespan should not extend beyond the duration of the Conference itself. On the final document or documents, we think that it does not make sense to start an argument right now. Let us wait and see at the end of the Conference what is feasible.

On the substance of the Conference, we would want to try to build upon the Principles and Objectives of the 1995 Review Conference. More specifically, in the context of nuclear disarmament, as laid down in paragraph 4C of the Principles and Objectives document, we would like to see whether we can further develop and specify the commitment contained in that paragraph. The key words that we have in mind are "transparency" and "accountability" by the nuclear-weapon States, and these two principles go hand-in-hand and will reinforce each other.

On transparency, we think that the United Kingdom has set the right example and made a very good beginning. We wonder whether it might be conceivable for all five nuclear-weapon States to provide the numbers of warheads, delivery systems and stocks of fissile materials that they possess, deployed and non-deployed, strategic and tactical. We were encouraged by the briefing that the United States gave us a few weeks ago. We hope that this example will be followed by the other nuclear-weapon States, and possibly be expanded to actual numbers.

On accountability, we would try to see whether agreement can be reached on a more binding and systematic procedure, whereby the five nuclear-weapon States commit themselves to providing periodically an account of what progress they have made on the road towards nuclear disarmament. In such a process, the non-nuclear NPT States parties should not just be spoken at; there should be a genuine exchange. The end result of this accountability should preferably be a written report. In the same accountability arrangement, the nuclear-weapon States could deliver on transparency, as I mentioned earlier. In this context, we also very much welcome the ideas that were presented by the then Norwegian Minister for Foreign Affairs, when he addressed this Conference two weeks ago. Practical ideas like these may also help to improve the future review process.

The Netherlands also believes that there are creative and innovative ways to give heed to legitimate calls for more legally binding negative security assurances.

There are more things we would like to achieve at the NPT Review, but I wanted to limit myself to the major elements. In addition, I want to make the point that, within this Conference, we developed, together with Belgium, Germany, Italy and Norway, a mandate for a working group on nuclear disarmament. I will refrain from reading the precise wording, and I realize that, for a number of countries, this carefully-crafted language does not go far enough. Yet I have to say that the perfect can sometimes be the enemy of the good. I refer once again to what I said at the beginning of my statement about idealism and realism.

(Mr. Sanders, Netherlands)

We would prefer to make at least a start with a debate on nuclear disarmament in this Conference, rather than being sentenced to an enduring stalemate.

The Netherlands is a founding member of both the European Union and NATO. This determines to a large extent our positions and choices. But within these loyalties and according to old democratic traditions, there is a considerable degree of freedom to give way to our national preoccupations. There is a sense of urgency among our population and within our Parliament about the need for further steps on the road towards the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. My Government shares these sentiments, and wishes to seize every opportunity to make progress. We make the proposals that I have addressed inspired by our long-standing traditions and ideals in the field of international peace and justice, while at the same time remaining aware of the restrictions that the real world imposes on what is feasible and what is not.

Mr. BALBONI ACQUA (Italy): Mr. President, as this is the first time I have asked for the floor under your presidency, may I begin by expressing my congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference, as well as my best wishes for your task. Let me assure you of my delegation's support in the difficult job you have undertaken. I would also like to welcome our new colleagues who have recently joined us in the Conference on Disarmament, namely, Ambassador Faessler of Switzerland and Ambassador Noboru of Japan. I look forward to cooperating closely with them in the future.

I would like to say a few words after the statement, supported by my delegation, made by the distinguished representative of Germany. My attention is drawn by the specific part of his statement which concerned the proposal to nominate a Special Coordinator on the landmines issue.

Italy signed and ratified the Ottawa Convention and it is taking part in the different sectors of its implementation with strong commitment and close attention.

In October 1997, that is, before the date of our signature of the Ottawa Convention, the Italian Parliament passed one of the most advanced pieces of legislation on this matter, banning in a full and very strict manner anti-personnel mines. With its national legislation, the fruit of the sensitivity to this issue of the Italian Parliament and of Italian public opinion, Italy wished to demonstrate its commitment to combating these weapons and to contributing to the further development of international humanitarian law. In this context, Italy has firmly resolved to work with the entire international community and to contribute to the continuing improvement of the global and coordinated strategy defined by the "Ottawa process" for the complete elimination of anti-personnel mines. For Italy, this strategy lays down the objective of universal participation in the Ottawa Convention, while providing for complementary measures fully consistent with the high international standard set by the Convention.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the distinguished representative of Italy for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine, Ambassador Maimeskul.

Mr. MAIMESKUL (Ukraine): Mr. President, as I am taking the floor for the first time under your presidency, let me congratulate you on the assumption of these important functions. Despite the current deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament, we still hope that, during the second part of your tenure - or at least during the second part of the Conference's annual session - our forum will resume its substantial work within the framework of the appropriate subsidiary bodies and other mechanisms.

In this context, I should reiterate the call, addressed to the plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament on 9 March 2000 by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Borys Tarasyuk, to resume, without further delay, talks on a fissile material cut-off treaty and on the issue of negative security assurances in the respective ad hoc committees.

We are also convinced that it is feasible and achievable to carry out substantial work on the issues which were recognized previously as non-controversial ones, while continuing intensive, meaningful consultations on the mandates and formats of the subsidiary bodies for two fundamental critical issues, namely, general aspects of nuclear disarmament and PAROS.

We therefore support the statement made a few minutes ago by our German colleague, Ambassador Seibert, on behalf of 22 delegations.

Finally, Mr. President, allow me to use this occasion to bid farewell to our distinguished colleague and friend, Ambassador Illanes of Chile, and to wish him and his family success and happiness.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the representative of Ukraine for his statement and for the warm words addressed to the President and I now call upon the representative of Bulgaria, Ambassador Draganov.

Mr. DRAGANOV (Bulgaria): On behalf of the Bulgarian delegation, I would also like to extend to you our sincere congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to express my best wishes for success and declare my delegation's readiness to support you in your important endeavours. I would also like to congratulate Ambassador Faessler and Ambassador Noboru and to assure them of my delegation's continued support and cooperation. My words of appreciation and wishes for well-being and further success go to Ambassador Illanes, with whom it has been a privilege to work.

The reason for my taking the floor today is to express the principal position of our delegation and associate the Republic of Bulgaria with the statement made by Ambassador Seibert on behalf of a number of countries today. It is our concern that, at the end of the first part of this year's session, the Conference on Disarmament has still not been able to start substantive work. We also think that there are a number of common elements in the

(Mr. Draganov, Bulgaria)

different proposals put forward in 1999 and during this year and believe that a decision to start substantive work on those elements can open the way to overcoming the deadlock in the other important spheres of our work as well. To my mind, not to do so would be, apart from all else - and I would not want to repeat what has already been said - a sheer waste of time, effort and tax-payers' money.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the representative of Bulgaria for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President and I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Lithuania.

Mr. NAVIKAS (Lithuania): I am taking the floor for the first time at this session of the Conference. Allow me, first of all, to congratulate you most warmly on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, as well as to thank your predecessors for their valuable contributions to the work of the Conference. My delegation is convinced that with your diplomatic skills and vast experience, you will successfully guide the Conference through this difficult period in its work. Let me offer you the full support of the Lithuanian observer delegation and wish you all success in discharging your important duties.

I would like to refer to the statement made today by the Ambassador of Germany on behalf of a group of countries. My delegation would like strongly to support the statement, as it offers, in our view, a way of moving forward in the work of the Conference, by securing the possible elements of its work that seem to enjoy common support and by working hard on the others with a view to finding an early agreement. Most important, this approach could create a momentum for overcoming the deadlock at the Conference and thus address the greatest concern, that of the paralysis of the work of the Conference on Disarmament, which you, Mr. President, expressed in your opening statement.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the representative of Lithuania for his statement and for the warm words addressed to the President. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Slovakia.

Mr. MISTRÍK (Slovakia): Mr. President, in the absence of our Ambassador, allow me to extend to you our warmest congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. May I also assure you of my delegation's support and cooperation in your efforts to move the Conference towards substantive work.

I would like to express my delegation's support for the statement delivered a short while ago by the distinguished Ambassador of Germany. The common elements described in that statement have been directly or indirectly supported by my delegation in the past and I would now like to reiterate our support. My delegation believes that a chance should be given for substantive work to start on these elements.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the distinguished representative of Slovakia for his statement and the kind words addressed to the President and I call on the distinguished representative of Romania.

Mr. HORUMBA (Romania): Mr. President, in the absence of my Ambassador, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the important office of President of the Conference on Disarmament and assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation. I would also like to extend my congratulations to your predecessors for their work and their efforts to reach a solution on the programme of work of our Conference. In this regard, I extend the support of the delegation of Romania to the proposal contained in the statement by the delegation of Germany on behalf of a number of other delegations and the declaration of readiness to start substantive work on those items of the agenda where common agreement seems to be reached. In this context, I take this opportunity to underline the importance my delegation attaches to the early re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee under agenda item 1, to negotiate a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices.

Mr. FERNÁNDEZ SALORIO (Argentina) (translated from Spanish): Allow me to welcome you as President of the Conference and to assure you of the full support of our delegation in your tasks.

I have asked for the floor, in order to convey, on behalf of Ambassador Sánchez Arnau and the entire Argentine delegation, and also on my behalf, our sadness at the departure of one of the very important ambassadors at the Conference on Disarmament, the distinguished representative of our sister Republic of Chile, Ambassador Illanes. We shall miss his knowledge, his experience and the invariably kind and calm way in which he conveyed his advice. We wish Ambassador Illanes and his family the very best success and happiness in the future.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the distinguished representative of Argentina for his statement and his words of support to the President and I now call on the distinguished representative of Albania.

Mr. BENDO (Albania): Allow me, first of all, to congratulate you, on behalf of the Albanian mission, since my Ambassador is not present here, on the position you have taken up recently.

I should like to be brief in my statement and to join the many previous distinguished speakers who have supported the statement of the Ambassador of Germany. I would like to stress that Albania fully supports the statement and the common elements proposed therein.

Mr. PATRIOTA (Brazil) (translated from Spanish): Like my Argentine Colleague, I would like, on behalf of Ambassador Amorim and our entire delegation, to express our sadness at the departure of Ambassador Illanes. As representative of Chile, our sister nation, he has shown exceptional diplomatic skills, both personal and professional, and we will miss him a great deal. We wish him and his family every happiness and success upon his return to his country.

Mr. LAURIE-ESCANDON (Peru) (translated from Spanish): As this is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor in your term of office, we would like to congratulate you most sincerely and pledge all our support to you in your important and difficult duties.

I have asked for the floor to express, on behalf of the Permanent Representative of Peru and the entire Peruvian delegation, our appreciation for the very laudable work done by Ambassador Illanes of Chile in the Conference on Disarmament. Ambassador Illanes carried out his work as Special Coordinator with unflagging enthusiasm and understanding, in seeking ways to improve the work of the Conference. Our delegation gave its full support to the proposals of Ambassador Illanes and we are very sad that the Conference did not take any decision on those proposals. In addition to his work as Special Coordinator, he always tried to seek consensus to foster the work of the Conference. For that reason and for his eminent personal and professional skills the delegation of Peru will miss him sorely. For my own part, I can say that Ambassador Illanes has been a source of inspiration and I regret his departure. I wish him every success in the future.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the distinguished representative of Peru for his statement and kind words addressed to the President. Now I call on the distinguished representative of Spain.

Ms. RICO (Spain) (translated from Spanish): I, too, wish to join in the congratulations extended to you on your recent assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, as I have not been able to do this before. I also wish to add my voice to the regrets and the good wishes conveyed to the Ambassador of Chile on his departure. He not only represented his country in this Conference for several years in a very masterful way, but he has also made continuous constructive contributions to our performance of our tasks and our work here, contributions which will continue to be felt after he has left us. In the view of my delegation and as demonstrated this morning, in the light of the many references made to him, his reputation is going to stay with us for a long time after his departure. On behalf of the Spanish delegation and the Spanish Government, I would like to wish him and his family all the very best for his future in Chile.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the distinguished representative of Spain for her statement and for her words of support and I call on the distinguished representative of Ecuador.

Mr. GALLEGOS-CHIRIBOGA (Ecuador) (translated from Spanish): As this is the first time that I am taking the floor under your presidency, I would like to congratulate you and wish you every success. I also wish to add my voice to the words of those delegations who have taken the floor before me, to recognize the personal and professional leadership of Ambassador Illanes and, on behalf of the delegation of Ecuador, to praise his skill and leadership, which was invaluable to us during the three years we attended the Conference on Disarmament as observers and instrumental in securing our position today as members of the Conference. I would like to wish him and his family good fortune and to pay tribute to his personal qualities, both as a gentleman and a distinguished diplomat.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the distinguished representative of Ecuador for his statement and words of support.

With that my list of speakers for this meeting has been exhausted. As there are no delegations wishing to take the floor, before we adjourn the meeting, I would like now to inform you of the progress of my consultations.

As you know, over recent days I have been conducting intensive and wide-ranging consultations on a bilateral basis with a large number of delegations. The purpose of these consultations is to see, first, how delegations assess the deadlock in the Conference; and, second, how delegations view and assess the reasons and factors responsible for this situation. The aim was to determine whether, in the views of delegations, there are possibilities of overcoming these factors and whether delegations see any specific approaches which would enable us, at the level of practical compromise rather than that of national positions, to set in motion the practical work of the Conference.

These consultations have shown that the overwhelming majority of delegations consider it entirely unrealistic to try and solve the intractable problems arising in the Conference before it suspends its work tomorrow. Accordingly, as the consultations have shown, most delegations believe that it would not be productive for the President to seek new compromise proposals during this period.

The consultations have also shown, on the other hand, that all delegations have some hope of progress in developments outside the Conference in the period before the Conference begins the second part of its 2000 session on 24 May. Delegations also hope that developments in this period could create a new window of opportunity for the Conference to solve the intractable problems relating to the programme of work and causing the current deadlock in the Conference. In the light of the impetus gained in those consultations, I intend to proceed as follows.

First, to continue the consultations I have begun with a view to identifying a process that could meet with consensus support by the Conference. In this connection, I invite all delegations wishing to make an additional contribution to these consultations and to submit proposals on possible ways and means of solving our problem, to have no hesitation in approaching me, including in the inter-sessional period and also during my absence from Geneva, through the delegation of Belarus.

Second, immediately before the start of the second part of this session of the Conference and during the very first days of its work, to conduct a new round of consultations to determine whether delegations, at that new stage, see possible solutions that might unblock the situation and, if so, what these solutions are. The action of the President for the remaining period of his term of office will be determined by delegations' responses to these questions. Obviously, in operational terms, this period will not be long - 10-12 days after the resumption of our work. In

(The President)

this connection, I would request that delegations have determined, by the beginning of the next part of our session and bearing in mind any developments that have occurred by that time, possible parameters within which they can manoeuvre. As President, I would like these parameters to be as broad and flexible as possible, and believe that they should respect the need to maintain the high standing of the Conference on Disarmament. Today much has been said about this.

On this note, we have completed our business for today and, effectively, for the first part of our annual session. I bid you farewell and I should like to announce that the next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 25 May 2000, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.